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McDonald's Union Drive Gains Ground

by Sonia Verma

Teamsters move to unionize second Québec franchise

Employees at a second Québec McDonald's franchise have squared off against the fast-food giant to press for unionization in what is shaping up to be the largest union drive the company has yet faced in North America. According to the Teamsters, who filed for union certification on behalf of forty employees of the Mount Royal franchise, workers at up to thirty additional Montréal franchises are gearing up for similar actions.

The first attempt to unionize a Québec franchise began

in St. Hubert last February, where the case is still pending at the Commissaire du Travail. Franchise owners Mike and Tom Capelli have hired high-priced Montréal law firm Martineau & Walker to contest the union drive, objecting to the size of the bargaining unit which the Teamsters have requested be recognized.

The Capelli's argue that any bargaining unit must include all six franchises owned by the brothers. This expanded unit would mean that the Teamsters would have to garner support from a majority of employees in each of the six Capelli restaurants to ensure certification for any one of them. "It would definitely

be a tremendous setback," observes Van Meerbeek.



With the Commissioner's decision anticipated next month, Frederic LeVigne, a 17 year-old part-time employee of the Mount Royal franchise is following the case closely. "The workers in St. Hubert are showing us that it is possible, and if they win at the Ministry of Labour, things will really start to snowball," he comments.

Complaints from workers centre on poor working conditions, unpaid hours and inadequate pay. Employees have reported having to begin their shift half an hour earlier than scheduled without compensation for the extra time. "The maximum raise anyone has gotten at this franchise has been twenty-five cents an hour every six months," cites LeVigne. "The company has bent over backwards to prevent us from pursuing unionization."

Barbara Thompson, McDonald's provincial director of marketing, maintains employees have no need to unionize. "The employees have always been the heart of our business. We've always taken care of them and their well-being." Thompson characterizes the swell of union support as "part of the [Teamsters'] desire to serve their own agenda. There is no anti-union policy. But so far, employees have always told us that they have not needed third party representation."

As pressure mounts from pro-union employees, Lavigne alleges that the company has resorted to blatant intimidation tactics in an attempt to douse union support. The same day the Teamsters filed for certification at the Commissaire du travail, LeVigne claims that three managers at the Mount Royal restaurant pressured workers to sign union disclaimer forms which state that the signee has voluntarily agreed not to be represented by the Teamsters. "Management takes each employee into an office, closes the door and says: 'If

you like your job, you know what to do,'" alleges LeVigne. "Three bosses with you behind a closed door. That's a lot of intimidation."

Employees at the St. Hubert franchise also allege that McDonald's had a hand in stalling hearings at the Commissaire du travail, which have been in proceedings for nearly a year. According to Martin Tremblay, an employee at the restaurant, management reacted to the request for certification by cutting back the hours of pro-union employees and shuttling in anti-union workers from nearby franchises to water down support for the Teamsters.

was dismissed from both the Quebec Superior Court and the Court of Appeal, allegations are still flying as to who picked up the lawyer's bill which may have run as high as \$300 an hour.

Tremblay suggests that McDonald's fronted the money to hire Sirois, "I know [the new employees] wouldn't be able to hire him on minimum wage." McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd. flatly denies the charges of involvement.

The Montréal Teamsters remain undeterred by the lengthy St. Hubert court battle

and continue to pursue a vigorous pro-labour campaign in McDonald's restaurants throughout the city. If successful, these workers would be the first to successfully unionize in all of North America. Two previous attempts to unionize franchises in



In October, these new workers hired lawyer Guy Sirois who challenged the impartiality of André Brusière, the commissioner presiding over the case. Although this challenge

Longueuil, Québec and Orangeville, Ontario failed due to a decline in support among workers. The Teamsters, however, are confident that the St. Hubert and Mount Royal restaurants' low-turnover rate coupled with high proportion of full-time employees bodes well for the prospects of unionization.

"The typical McDonald's employee has changed," explains Louis Fournier, spokesperson for the Quebec Federation of Labour, an umbrella group for the Teamsters. "We have a lot of university students who aren't willing to put up with mistreatment and intimidation," he says.

If Brusière chooses to certify the St. Hubert McDonald's, Fournier says that a significant precedent will be set for employees in the burgeoning food service industry. The Quebec Federation of Labour has already successfully certified bargaining units at Harvey's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Tim Horton's in the province.



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editorial offices:
3480 McTavish St., Montréal, QC, room B-03, H3A 1X9
business and advertising office:
3480 McTavish St., Montréal, QC, room B-17, H3A 1X9
email: daily@generation.net

business manager: Marian Schrier
assistant business manager: Jo-Anne Pichel
advertising management: Letty Matteo, Boris Sholov
advertising layout and design: Mark Brooker

editorial:
(514)-398-6784
business/advertising:
(514)-398-6790
fax:
(514)-398-8318

contributors:

Ashish Dewan, Kyle Fuas, Alex Halperin, Salman M. Husain,
Kevin Su, Paul Sheridan, Noémie Tossignant, Neil Verma

co-ordinating editor:
Sonia Verma
co-ordinating news editor:
Mark Raitner
co-ordinating culture editor:
-

cover by:
Lori Braun

news editors:
Maggie Gilmour, Keri Kosuri
culture editors:
Jessica Lim, Julien Lapointe
features editor:
Venla Cook

daily francais:
Magali Boister
photo editor:
Lori Braun

layout and design co-ordinators:
Paul Revere, -
office co-ordinator:
Samantha Murphy
project co-ordinator:
Andrea Mason
online editor:
Robin Perelle

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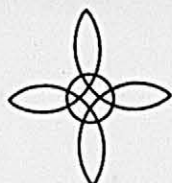
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A Rough Journey

By Paul Sheridan

Literary critic's *Random Walks* satisfy those who survive the trip

In the preface to *Random Walks*, Professor David Solway kicks off his collection of critical literary essays with a war cry: "My problem...is that I have lots of axes to grind and no hatchets to bury." He doesn't just sharpen them either; Solway hacks away at Susan Sontag's landmark essay "Against Interpretation", Barbara Johnson's "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida" and Erin Mouré's poem "Pronouns on the Main." All three are carved up by the Professor's sharp writing. If the authors and subjects listed so far mean nothing to you, don't worry: this book is target-marketed at the Honours English demographic. Despite this specificity, many worthwhile comments on the current literary scene, along with useful analysis of a variety of literary classics, can be found by any reader of *Random Walks*. That is, if you can machete your way through the author's dense thicket of prose.

David Solway, who is also a poet, enjoys placing twisting turns of phrase into his essays that require multiple readings to fully understand. My favorite example can be found in his explanation of "Fellatiotics", in which he writes that "an author is one - to use a male metaphor - who projects in his text an erect phallus insufficiently swallowed; it is up to the reader if he or she is to valorize the textual representation, if it is to seem real, to descend passionately, in imagination, upon the implied author." While this

sentence may at first glance appear to be taken from *Penthouse's Letters for Graduate Students*, Professor Solway is instead pointing out the responsibility of a reader to engage a text actively and with care, presumably with analogous technique to that required for his arresting "male" metaphor. He is rejecting ideological critics who read in cruise control, lazily slapping on "Deconstructionist" and "Feminist" labels wherever such trendy frames of reference are vaguely applicable. Every essay in *Random Walks* is a kind of Cryptic Crossword, but all can be solved with due amounts of aspirin and coffee.

Deconstruction and Feminism are frequent targets of Solway's wrath. He does not so much attack these ideologies as express his be-

lief that many Canadian critics who claim to be "Deconstructionist" are to Jacques Derrida what Gavin Rossdale is to Kurt Cobain. They are worshipful imitators with little independent capacity for critical thought. These critics, he claims, are so caught up in their vocabulary of traces, absences and binary oppositions that they make only passing reference to the supposed subjects of their criticism. For example, Deconstructionist Barbara Johnson bases her analysis of Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter" entirely on "the assumption that the purloined letter is the mother's missing phallus which is eventually returned." Johnson, fascinated with interplay, allegorical structure and

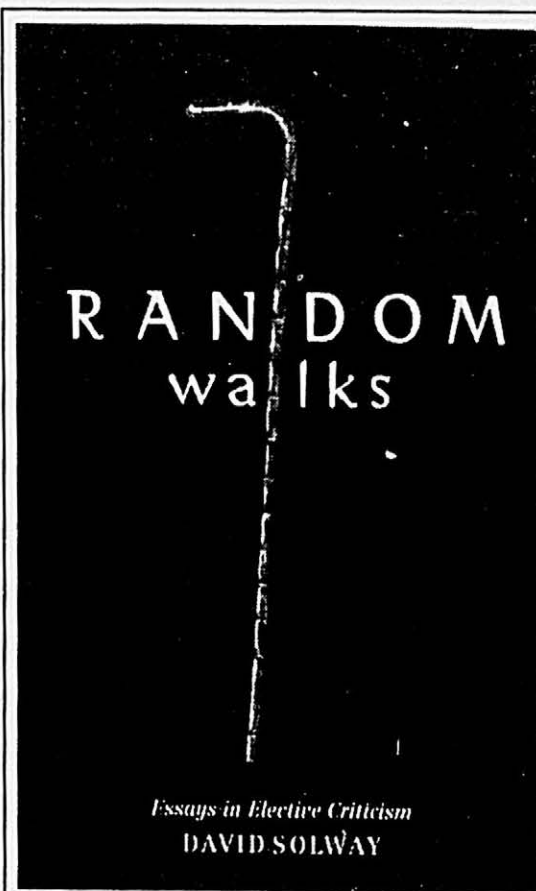
ticate and subdue the feminine reality and which we must unwrite or dewrite." However, faster than you can say the words: "he should write for the *Daily*," Professor Solway changes tack, quipping that "[Pronouns on the Main] is boring not only because its language is flat and formless...but because it is old hat, merely fashionable and consequently disingenuous." In other words, no matter how important a poem's content may be, it must present that content in a new, aesthetically meaningful way. Progressive politics cannot benefit from bad art.

This opinion asks difficult questions about the function of art. A perfect example is Rebekah Blok's poem "Elegy", published in the December 2nd 1997 issue of the *McGill Tribune*, in commemoration of the Montreal Massacre. While the poem itself is mediocre (a sample: "ffear fear! sudden fear! / oh stop / must get out / can't get out /so scared / can't/noone no no no no!"), its apparent message that misogyny is continually prevalent in Canadian society has obvious merit. Should one read a bad poem because it means well? Or does an incompetent work of art only serve to trivialize the cause it claims to represent? Many of David Solway's *Walks* present such provoking questions to the reader.

Still, the Professor's book is not all hacking and slashing. Solway also includes several insightful essays on works by Shakespeare, Kafka, Swift, Layton and Joyce. These essays put the style of literary criticism which *Random Walks* endorses into practice, using close reading and careful research to discover new artistic elements within the work, rather than to unearth blanket endorsements for trendy ideologies which lie outside the text. The cumulative effect of David Solway's essays on current literary theory can be compared to that of a stock market correction: a deflator of hype, which in the long run benefits everyone.

By all means read this book. That is, if you have the patience to decipher phrases like "the vertical slash through the S permutes into the horizontal bar across the A like the rail in an eternally ascending elevator which we grasp with affected nonchalance as we rise gradually, inexorably with it."

Keep that aspirin bottle handy.



circuits of desire, never bothers to substantiate this not-so-obvious claim. Professor Solway urges the reader to avoid "this psychocritical...debossage" and calls for a return to "the decency of good writing."

Feminism receives its own share of hatchet attacks in the essay "Pronominal Debris", an assault on Erin Mouré's poem "Pronouns on the Main." With the ease of a master, David Solway develops a strong Feminist reading of the poem, then proceeding to effortlessly knocks it back down. He first writes that "if the poem does have a subject, it is the stereotyped reflection of women in that vast, pervasive, pseudo-literary text to which we all contribute, a novel on which we are all collaborating in order to domes-

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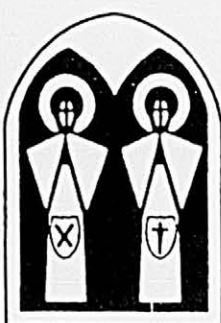
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Common Ground

Yakhdav provides acceptance for Queers coming out in the Jewish community

by Andrea Grace Mason

The group *Yakhdav* takes its name from the Hebrew meaning "together," signifying the group's mandate of working for the empowerment of Queer and Jewish men and women — two seemingly irreconcilable identities.

"We hope that members will be able to interweave aspects of themselves," says Michael Chervin, former co-president and current member of *Yakhdav*.

"It's important for people to know that they can combine sexual identity and religion," comments Udy Copel, Vice-President of *Yakhdav*. "It helps to realize that there are more people in the same situation — that you're not alone. It makes self-acceptance and daily life easier to know that you are linked together with others through shared similar experiences."

Founded in the 1970s as the all-male *Naches*, *Yakhdav* has evolved into a group of approximately 60 members with an equal number of men and women who range in age from 19 to 50 and come from diverse cultural backgrounds. The group provides services including a confidential peer-resource line, social events centred around the Jewish holidays and a bi-monthly newsletter, *Hazak*. *Yakhdav* seeks to develop educational work and promote visibility within both the Jewish and Queer communities.

In a culture which strongly values family, marriage and reproduction, coming out can be particularly complicated. *Yakhdav* president Diane (who requested that her last name be withheld), states that "many Jewish parents have enormous trouble accepting Queer children. I remember when I came out," she relates, "It was treated like a disease."

The stress which Jewish culture places on its own continuity can lead to the demonization queers. "The history of attempted genocide [against Jews] results in a concern on the part of parents for their daughters to have children," explains Chervin.

In light of this emphasis on fam-

ily and community, coming out means "risking a lot more," declares Chervin. "Families tend to be close-knit, including extended family. It's very important not to be alienated from the Jewish community, which can be a place to seek refuge within the larger society. If you're rejected by the Jewish community, it means giving up an important place, resources, support. There's a lot at

stake."

openly in the lobby. It will take time." Certain rabbis in Montréal have also shown an increased willingness to address issues of concern to *Yakhdav*. Bridge building attempts have yielded discussions concerning homophobia and how rabbis can best address the issue in their congregations. As with the population at large, there is a variety of levels of acceptance among rabbis. Reactions range from a Conservative synagogue's rabbi, who refused to mention discrimination and violence towards Queer Jews (in order to maintain a "good" relationship with his members), to a prominent Orthodox rabbi, who implored his congregation to understand and stand by their Queer children.

Various outreach programs form an integral part of

Yakhdav's attempt to increase understanding and end discrimination. During his term as President of the organization, Chervin, along with co-President Robbie Sanders and Shirley Sarna of the Québec Human Rights Commission, conducted a Human Rights Workshop on Homophobia and Heterosexism with the Protestant School Board of Greater Montréal in February, 1997.

"It was an important opportunity to mobilise people towards something very positive, to affirm a vision of Québec society and come together in solidarity around that vision," asserts Chervin.

Yakhdav also participated in the construction of the Maison Chessed House, for HIV positive people in the Montréal Jewish community. *Yakhdav's* active role has resulted in an increase of "respect and recognition," comments Copel.

Such efforts, declares Chervin, are "important for the well-being of Québec society as a whole."

Yakhdav's next event will be its "Tu B'Shevat & Chanukah Potluck" on Feb. 8. Info: 933-7387.



stake."

With the aim of promoting understanding and acceptance, *Yakhdav* facilitates regular "Family, Friends, Members" evenings as well as support groups for parents who "have nowhere turn and no one else to ask," describes Diane. A third party, she says, is crucial.

Yakhdav has forged closer ties within the larger Jewish community of Montréal, especially over the last five years. Increased recognition has been achieved in the form of alliances with groups such as YM-YWHA (Young Men and Women's Hebrew Association), the B'nai Brith Human Rights League, the Federation CJA (Canadian Jewish Appeal) and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Chervin notes that institutions of the Jewish community in Montréal have "opened up a lot" recently.

Recently, *Yakhdav* lodged a complaint with the Québec Human Rights Commission against the YM-YWHA for refusing to provide *Yakhdav* with a space for meetings. Now, *Yakhdav* is an affiliate of the organization. However, cautions Chervin, "just because the Y as an institution is open, doesn't mean that someone who is Queer will feel comfortable talking about that

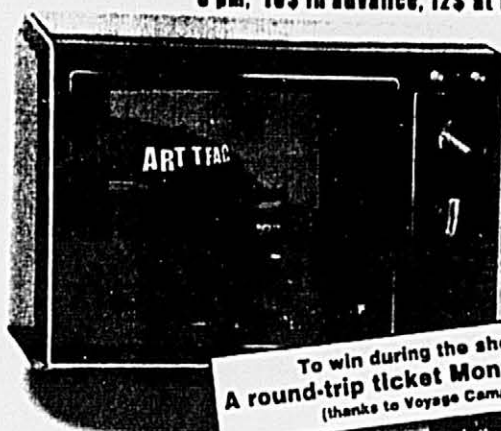
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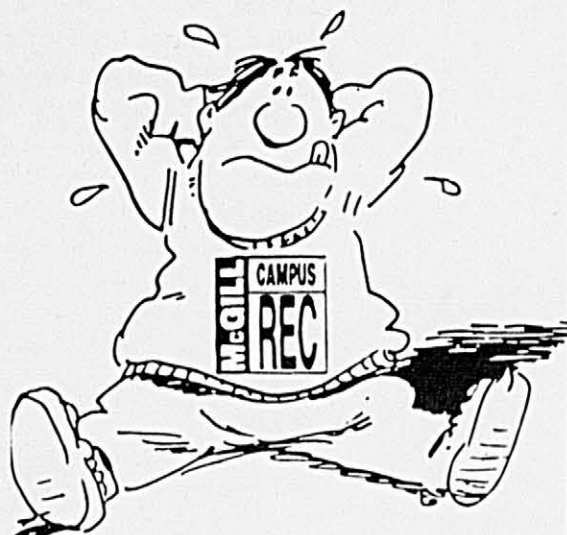
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The Stench Of Political Corruption

A personal view of a nation 50 years after independence

by Ashish M. Dewan

Some twenty years before Indian independence from British colonial rule, freedom fighter Natturam Gokhale stated that "India has many men with too much wealth and it's their privilege to punish the efforts of the few who can raise India from servitude and apathy."

India celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence last August 15th but ideological and political domination of the elite over the masses still continues. Today, however, instead of power resting in the hands of the British, it resides in the hand of the few rich and influential Indian politicians.

"Politics and law have been taken out of the hands of the people and corruption has now reached a level where it has seriously affected the economic growth of the country. It has now become just a part of India's culture," commented McGill Political Science professor Narendra Subramanian. He continued on to say "The political parties have simply tried to cater to the needs of the masses by handing out bribes in return for acts of patronage to big landlords who in turn have bought votes on their behalf."

THE CONGRESS PARTY: IDEALS

The party in India that has been formally charged with the most heinous acts of corruption is the Congress Party. This is the same party that people such as Gokhale, Nehru and Gandhi formed under the tyrannical British rule. The Congress which promised India freedom and rode on the maxim that they "will fight for unity and promote honesty, sincerity and simple truth", has ended up jeopardizing not only its dynamic reputation but also its stranglehold over Indian politics.

REALITY

At the 50th anniversary of India's independence the words of the father of the nation and Congress leader Mohandas K. Gandhi can be heard by every single Indian: "Wipe

every tear from your eye. Are things better for our people than before?"

Although we can report that we have made tremendous progress since independence in the areas of food, self-sufficiency, technology and education, we can give no response to fundamental economic questions such as, why is the distribution of wealth amongst its citizens so uneven? India can justly take pride in being the largest and most vibrant democracy in the world and boast of a constitution that rides on the maxim of secularism and equal reverence for all creeds and faiths, but the fact re-

cisions."

DECLINE OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

The 1989 Bofors scandal concerned the dealings of missile armaments from Switzerland. There were three major competitors involved, all of whom offered the same product, and the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi accepted one competitor over another on the some basis that he was offered a heavy deposit in his Swiss bank account. This was the first major publicized case of corruption in India. Although many felt that

party had left was India's sympathy, since the legacy of the Nehru family was still prominent in the political regime. The people's view of the Congress's political ideologies had been heavily marred by the stand they took in the Babri Masjid issue, when a group of fundamentalists burned down a Mosque since it had been constructed on a holy Hindu site. They voted for the party because they felt sorry that Rajiv Gandhi's mother had been assassinated by some Sikh Militants. Therefore, a lack of an ideology present within its political framework contributed heavily to the decline of the Congress Party.

Others factors at play ranged from the formation of a coalition party to combat the Congress to the simple fact that the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) had evoked a great degree of religious fervour about India as essentially being a land which belonged to the Hindus. This enabled parties such as the Janta Dal and the Bharitiya Janta Party (BJP) to gain prominence in the Indian political regime.

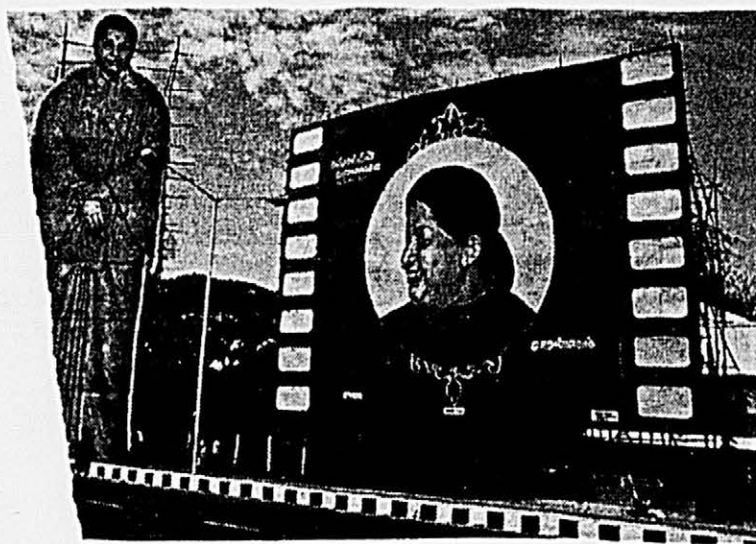
A final fact that led to the decline of the Congress was the obvious aftermath of the Emergency crisis of 1977. People were still shocked about the presence of corruption, that existed not only amongst prominent politicians but also included the leader of the country. This led to a great deal of insecurity amongst the citizens of India.

Parties which were opposed to the Congress tried hard to gain votes on the shortcomings of the congress and not on their own accomplishments. The Janta Dal, or later the United Front opposed liberalization and promised that they will tackle issues such as corruption. On the other hand, the BJP, as a fundamentally Hindu group, have promised Indians a Hindu India where English will be banned and Muslims will be deported to Pa-

kistan or Bangladesh. Although, these parties have not had a very strong ideology, they have garnered more votes on the premise that they are not as corrupt as the Congress party.

The stench of corruption in India has foregrounded the shocking irregularities that are present within its highly decadent political framework. Initially fueled by the high profile Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) incursion of former state and telecommunications minister, Mr. Sukh Ram, the raid revealed the largest ever seizure of currency from the home of any Indian politician or drug smuggler. According to the Times of India, the chunk of cash which was found in two trunks, twenty two suitcases, and two houses was ironically stashed behind an idol of the Hindu God Ram. Although this incident was by far the most highly publicized case of corruption in years, and therefore labeled as "the mother of all raids", in the larger scheme of Indian Politics, it is as inconsequential as a grain of salt in a desert.

Sharing the spoils of corruption, is the development minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Mr. R.K. Khrimy, who had the odious distinction of developing on less than 300 square kilometers of land when he received a contract to develop



on over 40,000 square kilometers. Although none of these accusations

In India on, dence

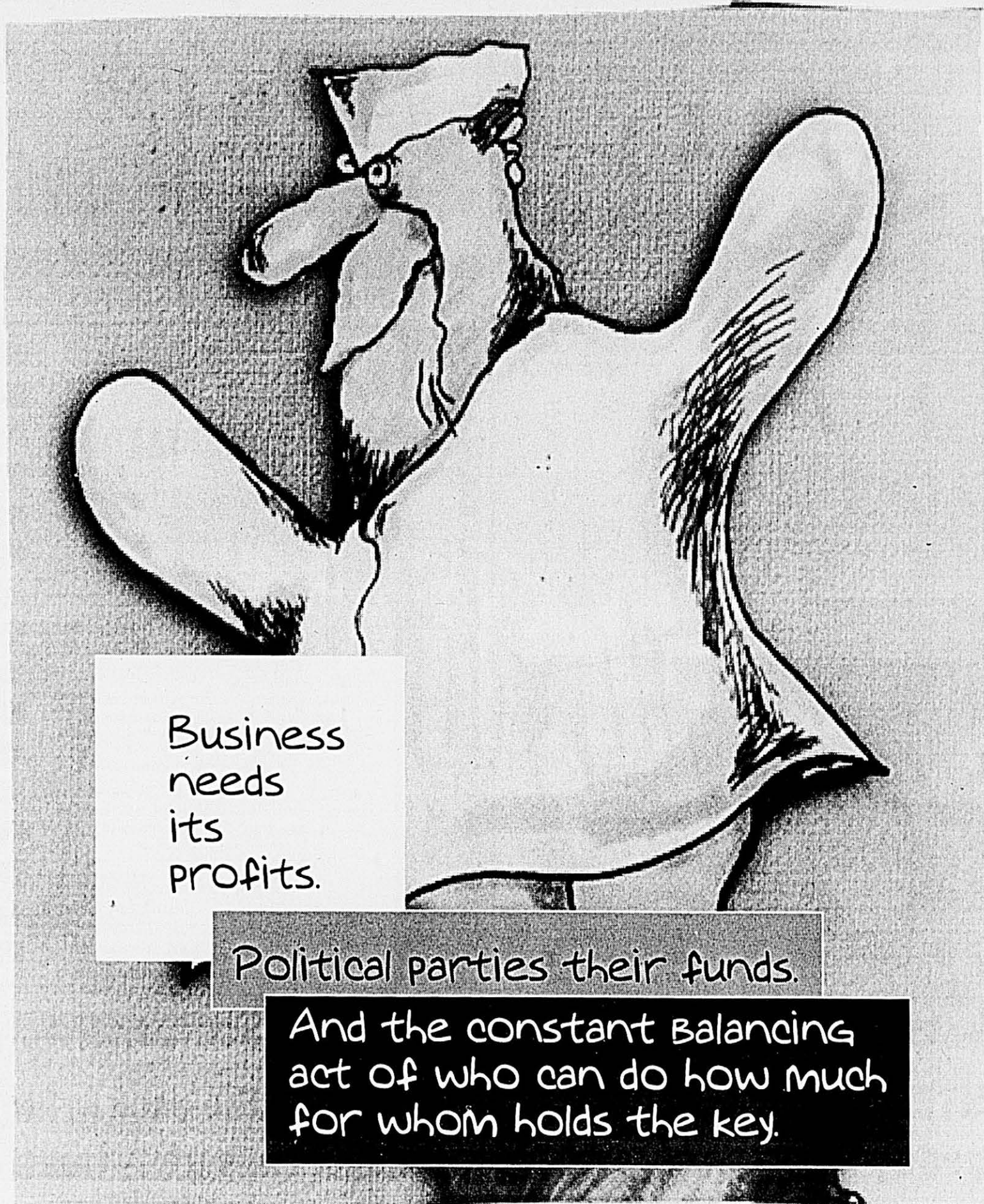
have been proven in a court of law, the citizens of Itawnagar are willing to testify against him. Coming from a lower-middle class family, he worked his way up the social ladder through small time scams and thefts from the Congress party where he worked as a student leader. Upon confrontation, he alleged that the cultivated land had simply been destroyed by the incessant rain. In reality, he had used the money to buy himself a thirteen bedroom house in the capital city of Itawnagar.

Mr. Swaraj Banarjee, the head of a prominent tea plantation in Assam, a neighboring state, commented that "Mr. Khrimy is known as 'the corrupt of Arunachal.' (sic) They have so much black money that they don't know what to do with it. I know the family well, and the money that they have acquired has come very recently, in the last four or five years. Although, Mr. Khrimy has no need for all this money, his wife keeps putting pressure on him since he belongs to a matriarchal family. Mr. Khrimy invited me to the Oberoi hotel some time early this year and tried to bribe me into selling up an illegal tea plantation with him. Obviously, I refused to do business with this man."

The state of Arunachal Pradesh



is one of the highest rainfall areas in the world and has a thick forest



Business
needs
its
profits.

Political parties their funds.

And the constant Balancing
act of who can do how much
for whom holds the key.

cover which maintains the ecological balance of the area. A group of politicians, spearheaded by Mr. Khrimy, are lobbying for the removal of a ban on tree felling in this region, thus allowing them to convert these forests into commercial dead wood.

This short-sighted commercialization of India's North-Eastern forest will destroy this delicate balance; it is the trees that prevent top soil erosion caused by the incessant rain. Forests also provide homes, occupations, and food to forest-based tribes who would be rendered homeless as a result of deforestation.

Despite the incredible costs of such a program to the regions inhabitants, the monetary benefits will go directly into the hands of politicians such as Mr. Khrimy.

Yermian Tsogay, a citizen of Itawnagar for the last 15 years mentioned, "The Khrimy family is not very well liked. Everyone in the capital city is aware of his shady

dealings but unfortunately no one can do anything about it."

Another strange case in Indian Politics is that of Congress Youth leader, Mr. Sushil Sharma, who murdered his wife in their apartment, mutilated her body in tiny portions and took it to an open air restaurant in the heart of the capital city. The restaurant was ordered closed as the murderer and his accomplices crammed his wife's body parts into the oven. The Times of India and India Today both openly conclude his guilt yet his fight to proclaim his innocence continues.

The most recent case of political corruption is that of Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, who after having the CBI officially discharge him of his services, handed over his seat to his wife. Rabri Devi, Laloo's wife, a woman with a grade three education, who knows nothing about the state of Bihar.

DIVERGENT VIEWS

Although many feel that the presence of corruption in the Indian political regime is an important issue, others feel that it does not deserve the amount of controversy it receives.

Mr. Rup Narayan Singh, a Quebec political party leader of Indian origin stated that "India has a lot of problems that are inherent in its culture, one of which is corruption. Although it is a very serious problem, it is by no means the only or the most important one." Although, Mr. Singh's claims are legitimate, the idea that corruption does not directly effect a country's standard of living is debatable. In India, the top 5% of the population have 70% of the country's income. If the poor are not given accessibility to the country's resources, social and economic development is impossible.

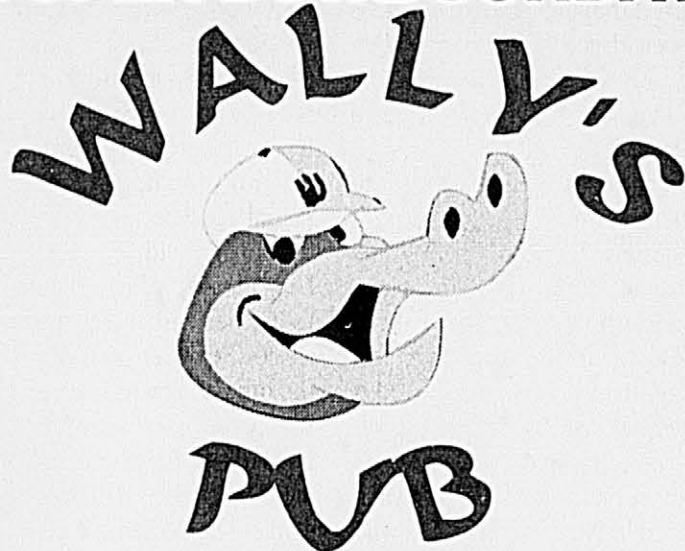
The politicians who indulge in corruption, by not declaring all their assets, are not paying adequate

taxes. This non-payment of taxes depletes the economy, since the government does not receive sufficient funds in form of taxes from the rich and privileged of India who account for almost 40% of country's income. This in turn, also has the side effect of creating class divisions and social inequalities.

The continued state of turmoil in Indian politics serves as the proverbial fly in the ointment for a country that is rapidly emerging as the world's second largest growing economy. The widening ripples which have literally put their finger in every pie, point to how there still remains a long haul ahead to restoring the unity and honesty that the Congress Party had promised post-independent India.

As Mr. Kamaljit Narayanan wrote in the August 15th issue of the Financial Post, "Sheer opportunism and valueless power-politics have taken over the principles of idealism that had been the hallmark of social and political life."

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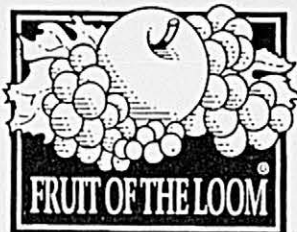


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The Basement

by Alex Halperin

Toys In

The Tuesday Night Café company have put together a straightforward and compelling production of Henrik Ibsen's masterpiece *A Doll House*. The actors present a reading which chooses to all but ignore the play's many subplots in favour of concentrating solely on the doomed marriage of Nora and Torvald Helmer.

Synthia Tom plays the difficult role of Nora competently. She seems more comfortable in the more dramatic scenes expressing Nora's pain with skill and dignity. She is less at ease during the first act before her character's epiphany. Tom does not believably portray Nora's brainless adoration and resorts to overacting. However, she sufficiently recovers to display the subtleties of Nora's later decision, knowing that leaving Torvald is necessary along with the doubt that

must accompany an act unacceptable in the age.

Long considered a feminist play, Tom is very much a modern Nora. She exaggerates her initial helplessness to a degree that it comes across as unrealistic. This makes her transition to independence more realistic as it implies she was overstating her role as meek housewife for the benefit of her husband, because she did not know what else she could do.

Her husband Torvald, a conservative banker, is not a complex character and yet Samir Mallal plays him with the subtlety of a high school bully. He is so repulsive and condescending that one wonders how Nora managed to stay with him so long. Slimy and repugnant in the first two acts, he seems to abandon his character in the third in favor of sophomoric rage. One would think he had flunked a test rather than lost his wife. Mallal does not convey the shallow love Torvald has for Nora. Rather he is more reminiscent of Miss Hannigan in *Annie* than of a lover who fancies



himself superior to his wife.

Fortunately, this does not cripple Nora's performance. Mallal allows Tom the room to explore her character. And as the most important function of Torvald is to give Nora an impetus for rash action, he is more than successful as the audience sympathizes with her and prays she will be able to escape some

how. In the background is a talented and under used supporting cast. Victor Cicchino is excellent as Nils Krogstad, the scorned former employee of Mr. Helmer whose insistence that Nora confess a past secret to her husband is sleazy and moralistic. He brilliantly captures

the true aura of the unlucky individual during the scene when he is struck with good fortune and understandably abandons his sanctimonious intentions in favor of his own prosperity.

Vida Panitch and Ian Hatton both turn in strong performances as Nora's friends Kristine and Dr. Rank. Panitch is solid as the stoic friend Kristine, who seems in awe of Nora's naiveté while maintaining the self-righteousness of having lived a harder life than Nora. Hatton plays the dying Dr. Rank with great poise but proves surprisingly moving when scorned by Nora. It is Dr. Rank who initially brings out the intelligent side of Nora, which Torvald either ignores or denies. Mr. Hatton does this stunningly as he confesses his love to the already overwhelmed heroine. Though director Matt Allen whisks by it, this scene is the most touching moment in the play. We see Nora torn between her obvious love for Dr. Rank and the necessity of rejecting him due to her life which has

spun out of control.

A Doll House is often produced as the struggle between Nora and the many forces which climax in her departure. This production downplays the sexual undertones in her relationship with Dr. Rank. Director Matt Allen chose to use her husband as the sole cause of her grief with the other characters there simply for moral support. In the claustrophobic basement of Morrice Hall, this works. The audience feels her confinement and resentment as we literally sit in the same light as the actors. It is not a revolutionary production, but the cast and crew have taken the modest resources made available to them and put together a production well worth seeing.

production of *A Doll House*

Tuesday Night Café's successful

CD REVIEWS

Palimpsest
P5K
(Derivative)

The remix was once the domain of djs, industrial acts and such post-disco duos as Soft Cell and Erasure, with room for the occasional pop group looking for a club hit. Meanwhile, the b-side was simply filler made necessary by 45s, an opportunity for some artists to experiment and others to do the same old thing, only worse.

With the arrival of CDs, however, collecting the two has presented record labels with a welcome stop-gap between albums. After all, it's not only cost-effective (this is essentially pre-recorded material), but now it's also considered artistically legitimate (the band reveals its innovative side). And yet, though the remixes & b-sides compilation has had its moments (Stereolab's *Switched On I & II*, Unrest's *B.P.M.* [1991-1994]), the majority of releases tend to fall into the Marilyn Manson *Remix & Repent* category: uninspiring, unenlightening and unnecessary.

I won't damn Montréal band P5K's (formerly Pest 5000) *Palimpsest* with that particular triumvirate of adjectives, because it's clearly a well-intentioned offering rather than some crass cash-in. Ultimately, though, *Palimpsest* is more interesting than enjoyable. The

remixes, mostly reworking tracks from 1996's *Onterabang*, range from bare-bones deconstruction to thumping space disco. But only two really beg for repeated listening: "Mattering," transformed by Slicker into jerky robo hip hop, and "Yes, Too Skinny," wherein ex-Eggs Rob Christinason strips away the guitar to reveal its violin-adorned heart.

The b-sides, largely older material culled from 45s, are neither particularly indicative of P5K's current work nor particularly gratifying, again with two exceptions: "Where The Moon Is," a shuffling mix of xylophone, wah wah and whimsy, and the R2D2-goes-to-the-circus "Astromental," which is also, encouragingly, the most recent track. Otherwise, the songs — and the album as a whole — serve primarily to chart the band's evolution from competent, if unoriginal, lo-fi popsters to experimental, sometimes rewarding, pop artistes. Which, I suppose, is as much as you can ask for.

-Kevin Siu

Purple City
Gratitude
(SOCAN)

It's Pearl Jam meets the Barenaked Ladies. Gratitude's new release *Purple City*, is a collection of six songs provoking the need to mosh at the most inopportune mo-

ments. The band, based in Toronto, is composed of vocalist Louis Dibiasse, guitarists Matt Baldassini, Mark Scarsellone and Jeff Pauletto, and percussionist Gus Kokkoros. Dibiasse is a versatile crooner in the title track hauntingly similar to Scarborough's Stephen Page. As the album progresses however, I was sucked slowly into the River Styx of early Eddie Vedder and all those songs at the end of the album no one listened to. The last three songs, "Angel With One Wing", "Chunk #4" and



"G.I.P." also tend to blend together musically in that, if you're not paying close attention, one might not notice one is no longer on track 3. Lyrics like "time has passed and now a soul is filled with pain-you realised you could break that chain" from "Angel With One Wing" do not help Gratitude's case. The band does have a polished sound, however unremarkable it may be, and is perfect background music for all those pseudo-alternative parties when you really don't care what the person next to you is blathering on about.

- Kyle Faas

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The deadline for submitting applications is
January 28, 1998.

While Daily Culture Slept...The Montréal

The suspension of Parisian Foucault's Pendulum Montréal War of the Roses: deconstructing a

by salman m.
husain

The McGill Daily was on holiday this past December, but that doesn't mean Montréal stopped spewing out cultural roses. Montréalers are used to long stemmed cultural roses in many colours and enjoyed a fertile culture hothouse of rose gardens this December.

The Month of December holds a magical, church rose window quality of jubilation, with the exception of December 1st, a Day Without Art-the International Day of Mourning and Action on AIDS Issues.

In December people tend to take stock by looking inwards to make plans and resolutions. And this last December was no different. Marked by Chanukah, X-mas and Kwanza celebrations, the month also saw the start of Ramadan - a sublime spiritual-end of month-long Islamic fabulousness.

Here is some artsy fartsy stuff that smells of rose-buds petals on Ganymede's bed that I had the chance to sniff:

Filmie Rose of Tokyo

Mako Idemitsu is an international artist from Japan with bouquets of accolade; from *Mention Spéciale* in the "Experimental" category to a Prix Procirop Selection. *article* housed a five-film rose-basket which ended on December 14. That was the day I trekked down to see the videos. It was a day of cold-wind snow-bears and I found the weather oppressive. But what I didn't anticipate was how oppressive I would find the videos, in particular *Kea, Act like a Girl*. Made in 1997, this video presented soft-spoken Kea, from whose mouth roses would fall whenever she spoke. The aroma was intoxicating. Mako jam-packs centuries of masochistic behaviour, submerging it in rose water and sprinkling the viewer. The result is a sensation of burning skin. Mako portrays

her experiences, from the standpoint of a woman, in an oppressive patriarchal environment that exists in familial and societal spaces in Japanese culture.

I spoke with Yudi Sewraj, the "selector" of the video tapes. He finds that Mako's video work "dramatizes" her personal philosophy in a symbolic fashion, while, in contrast, her tapes seem to func-



MAKO IDEMITSU'S "KEA, ACT LIKE A GIRL"

tion structurally as soap operas. He became interested in Mako's work more than a year ago, as a committee member at *article*. He felt, upon watching the video tapes, that Mako's work merited an audience and worked towards finding one for it. Yudi said, when I spoke to him on the phone, that "It [the exhibit] is really an introduction to her [Mako's] work" and encourages Montréalers to have a look/see. Yudi politely, humbly and quite unjustly states that he is only the "selector" of Mako's work. For this New York-educated marketing-major this sounds not quite hummm...on. Yudi Sewraj, video artist living in Montreal, creator of *Mr. X, Hybrid Creatures* and the soon to be released *A Box of His Own* coming to a festival near you, curated Mako Idemitsu's oeuvres choisies / selected works.

Tiger-strip Rose of Bengal

In today's Sister Wendy world, we need to unlearn by redefining, repositioning and recreating who is a curator. If you have a degree in Museumology or Art History, and the like, you may indulge in curatorial practices. Fine.

And as Curator Wendy and others are following in synch, more power to them. But, predominantly, New Yorkers are leading the way: they have something to say and they say it through their selection of artwork and by making their unique perspective happen and be known. I, myself, belong to this new school of expression. If one is not trained in a traditional way, some of

E

the old school art gallery directors and museum curators frown and scoff. To all the non-progressive traditionalists who can't unlearn and are unable to ac-

knowledge the *Other* space within the domain, all I can say is get ready for a nouveau, vibrant and exciting rose-bud with Bengal Tiger strips wherever this Brown-Queer-Muslim Curators' strip is represented.

Tea rose of Technoboro

OBORO is an artist center that houses and hosts exhibitions, videos, conferences, publications, performances, an artist residence and a tea salon. On December 12, OBORO opened Technoboro. Technoboro will provide research, production and distribution of telecommunication projects and works of art which incorporates new technologies. OBORO also launched a new web site: World Tea Party - a transcultural art tea salon. The organizers say that it explores the etiquette of human interactions through the rituals of sharing aesthetics, art,

music, poetry or a cup of tea. I found the reception buzzing with new works in progress and saw first hand virtual projects. However, I did not have virtual tea, but rather partook in some Red Rose.

Island Rose of Tender State

OBORO also housed an exhibit of Ramona Ramlochand's *Island in a Tender State*. International artist Ramona is a Montréaler who has just completed a collaborative exhibit with British Artist Keith Piper at the Ottawa Art Gallery. Currently, she is at the Banff Centre working on her new projects. *Island in a Tender State / Des îlots fragiles* deals with displacement issues in relationship to the ambiguity of "place".

Ramona Ramlochand says, "I want the uncertainty of 'place' to sharpen one's sense of the fragility and duplicity of the world." Ramona's work deals with photographic projection. She uses the slides she took while traveling abroad and projects them on interior and exterior Cana-



RICHARD FUNG'S CHINESE CHARACTERS

dian photographic tapestries. They are presented in light boxes and the transfer is projected back to the viewer, thus creating new visual and geographical time and spaces. I found the exhibit oddly addictive and was unable to leave. What I mean is that the

experience was an absorbing interaction in an abstract way. It was mesmerizing and believe you me it was a conceptual environment experience.

African Rose of Montreal

On 15th of December I was privileged to see the Montreal goddess on the Agora floor. The Agora School of Dance, associated with UQAM, was having end of course performance examinations. And the buzz was that Patricia was performing. Patricia is an instructor of African dance and an internationally renowned professional dancer. Her divinity was revealed by her superbly strong performance. Patricia is leaving for Africa to make Montréal proud. Upon her return expect new moves from the goddess.

Charlie Rose of Jamaica

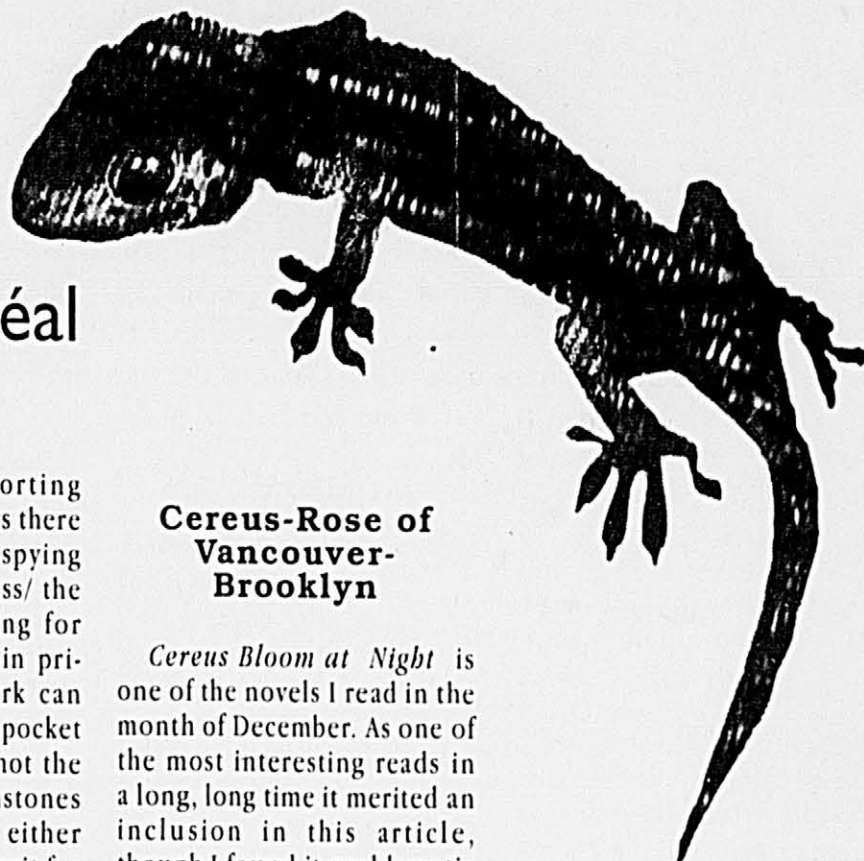
From *A Small Place* to *My Brother*, Jamaica Kincaid has done it again. Her critics are eating dust or maybe they are just indifferent to her work. Jamaica Kincaid always manages to receive acclaim and respect in the eyes of her readers. Critics have accused her of self-indulgently wallowing in the pain of her colonial upbringing. Jamaica Kincaid, during an interview with Charlie Rose (which ran on the last week of December on PBS) responded to this assault with the claim that she might not be looked upon negatively and accused of this had she been white and male. And I am inclined to agree with her.

My Brother is the story of Jamaica Kincaid's brother who died of AIDS. Jamaica Kincaid first heard of his illness in 1993 when her mother called her and asked to come down, as her brother was dying.

Jamaica Kincaid is not only a brilliant writer, she also made me a brilliant conversationalist at the New Year's Eve party. Her interview with Charlie Rose gave me yet another interesting topic on

Culture Thrived

buttressing thunderously morphing
multifaceted cultural petal of Montréal



which to converse with one of the most interesting conversationalists - writer, Nicholas Boston. The party at Faisal Deen's was a blast even though I didn't get to hear any of his poetry. Faisal Deen has written a book of poetry *Land without Chocolate* and I can't wait to read all his work. But I can't complain about the snippets he does send my way. Just listen to this, just listen to *Reason*.

Reason

I lose my ground
when i start to dream
he bites my hand
when i reach the gate-
way
and touch becomes a
national gesture but
they pelt the word as key
fits lock and
he walks away as i threaten
tremble

trembling reach
the threat of my reach
the curse of your reason
the story that could write
you
clean off the map turning
your
submarine offerings into
some
other happier convergence

and so dem say sodom
a sodom a so dem say

"dem cyaan blame me
dem cyaan blame me
dem best nah blamb me
dem a

burn if
d e m
b l a m e
me"

"dem a
get man-
gey and
old like if
d e m
blame me
dasha

dem a
get lock-
jaw and stop talk if dem
blame me pa
dem a go mad like thunder
if dem blame me ma"

(But I cannot talk about a
drought in this way.)
(I am beaten every time I
talk about dem in this way.)



you have heard them say
this: Sodom

is the jumbie call sodom
that take me during the night
is no one fault now that it
in me that sodom in me that
sodom in me so sweet no
broom can beat it out

(I can only talk about it
this way)
(In this way I suck the
sweet from my lips)
(They will say he turned
the corner)
(They will say he caught
the stones in his mouth)
(In this way they will say I
turned them into sugar)

of the within passporting
through those/ boarders there
behind your "reason" spying
me not wanting to cross/ the
gate into handstitching for
prayer to collect you in pri-
vate/ song no dog bark can
drown no stones in my pocket
brother/ man at least not the
ones that heart touchstones
only and no/ hellfire either
though we don't have wait for
that just/ turn the corner and
all the beauty loses purpose/
just turn the corner and and
story come to bump in the
greedy belly of/ the buller just
turn the corner and my love
follows you parades/ and par-
ties in the guises of the
bachannal just turn the cor-
ner/ so we can carry me down
to the river where they might
bury me so/ we can carry me
down to the stone that might
kill me so we can/ carry me
down to the book that might
write me so we can carry me/
down to the boy who might



Des îlots fragiles

Pink Rose of To- ronto

I went to see the first ever
Québécois retrospective of
Richard Fung's videos
curated by Thomas Waugh,
and I was impressed. Richard
Fung has taken identity poli-
tics of sexuality and race to an
effective but non-confronta-
tional level. This was my first
Fung experience and the nine
videos assembled by OBORO
gave me a window into the
genius that he is. The first
thing that struck me when I
watched *Orientation: Lesbian
& Gay Asians* was that Fung
was aligned with my Decem-
ber 1996 head space in 1985
(that's when the video was

made). Fung's *My Mother's
Place* explores Caribbean
roots and examines inter-
generational relationships.
Successful interculturalism
and hybridization models are
also present in Fung's moth-
er's place—Trinidad—which
are universal in their applica-
tion.

My favourites are *Dirty
Laundry* and *Chinese Char-
acters*. The former deals with
Chinese Canadian history in
the context of sexuality and
the latter deals with white
porn and mainstream gay cul-
ture in relation to Asian gays
and the politics of
marginalized minority cul-
ture.

Imagery and presence play
a very important role in the
identity politics discourse.
Nothing else has as far reach-
ing effects and is as powerful
as the existence factor. Fung's
Steam Clean video makes the
point in a most erotic &
sensual manner. It is
filmed in a Toronto
sauna where a South
Asian man and an Asian
man engage in safe-fuck
and create a message in Asian
imagery.

Thank-you Richard Fung
for the raunchy, tender, Asian
homo-eroticism. Now, I don't
have to wonder anymore.

These were just some of
the cultural petals that made-
up roses in Montréal this past
December.

Well, I didn't promise you
a rose garden.

Saal-e-noh mubark / Bonne
année

article (842-9686) and
OBORO (844-3250;
www.cam.org/~oboro) are
located at 4001 Berri; re-
spectively in Salle 105 and
301.



RICHARD FUNG'S *STEAM CLEAN*

and
so dem
s a y
sodom
a
sodom a
so them
say

what
you say?

Said
h e

wanted to "reason" to go in-
side tounge moving over lips
cracked and thirsty hands lost
clutching at thighs for affir-
mation/ touch that bursts out

fuck me just turn the corner

you turned the
corner

left me
in this great

age
of reason

where my
hands have

grown

insane

Events

Thursday, January 22

The McGill Women's Union holds open mike in support of the Montréal Women's Centre at the Monthly Coffee House. Cover \$3 or 3 cans of food.

Group, 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 19h30 in Shatner 423 (Women's Union). Call Emma 398-6823 for more info.

The McGill Choral Society is

looking for new members. MCS will be presenting the Chichester Psalms by Leonard Bernstein this semester. No experience required. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings, 19h30, C304, Strathcona Music Building.

Queer Line is back in service for the second semester. We're a confidential and non-judgemental

listening and referral phone line for anyone seeking LGBT-related info/referrals, or simply a listening ear. Give us a call Monday to Friday, between 20h and 13h at 398-6822.

The Black Community Resource Centre is looking for volunteer tutors to help elementary and high school students with Science, Math, History, English or French. Call Neil Mayers at the

Black Community Resource Centre at 342-2247.

Yeah. We'd like you to help out with the Black History Month issue. Okay?

coming in February

Friday, January 23

Dr. Raymond C. Rosen will be speaking on *Drugs and Desire: The New Sexual Pharmacology*. Stewart Biological Sciences Building, Room S1/3, at 15h.

Friday, January 30

The McGill Africana Studies Committee will be hosting the benefit SHAKE THE VISION for the African Studies Program at McGill at Isart. All proceeds go to the African Studies Program. Doors open at 19h30. Tickets \$7/\$5 for students. For info call 849-4918 or 393-1758.

Saturday, January 31

Annual Intercollegiate Lumberjack Competition. Opening ceremonies will be held at 8h, events taking place until 16h. It will take place on the Centennial Centre Field on the Macdonald Campus in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue. For info call 398-7789.

Ongoing

Jewish Family Services needs volunteer tutors in Hebrew, French or English. Call 342-0000 for more info.

The CLSC NDG/Mtl West is looking for volunteers to work directly with clients of the CLSC including the frail elderly, the physically and intellectually challenged and young mothers in need of support. For more info call the CLSC Central Volunteer Coordinator at 485-7811 ext 1015.

Santropol Roulant, a community organisation, needs volunteers to deliver meals to people in loss of autonomy. Call 284-9335 or drop by 111 Duluth ave. W.

Post-Abortion Support



QPIRG
Open House
Friday January 23
12 to 5pm
3647 University Street, 3rd floor
(between Prince-Arthur and Pine)
FREE FOOD!!!

FIND OUT ABOUT:

• QPIRG working groups

ACCES (Academic and Community Cooperation for Environmental Sustainability)
 Alternative Budget Group
 Campus and Community Waste Management
 Coop Café and Activist Resource Centre
 Criminal Injustice
 EarthSave
 girlSpace
 A Just Coffee Campaign
 NYCE (Network for Youth in Community Economics)
 Organic Food Store Group
 Perspective Magazine
 PROBE (Public Research on Business Ethics)
 Queer Straight Alliance
 Women of Colour Collective

• the QPIRG Library

is an easy to use resource for McGill students. We have many social justice and environmental books and magazines, most of which are not available in the McGill libraries

• the QPIRG Internship Program

allows students to do research projects for non-profit community groups for academic credit.

QPIRG (Quebec Public Interest Research Group at McGill)
students working for social and environmental change
vub.mcgill.ca/clubs/qpirg

daily classifieds

Ads may be placed through the Daily Business Office, Room B-07, University Centre, 9h00-14h00. Deadline is 14h00, two working days prior to publication. McGill Students & Staff (with valid ID): \$4.65 per day, 3 or more consecutive days, \$4.10 per day. General Public: \$5.90 per day, or \$4.95 per day for 3 or more consecutive days. Extra charges may apply, prices include applicable GST or PST. Full payment should accompany your advertising order and may be made in cash or by personal cheque (for amounts over \$20 only). For more information, please visit our office or call 398-6790. WE CANNOT TAKE CLASSIFIED ADS OVER THE PHONE. PLEASE CHECK YOUR AD CAREFULLY WHEN IT APPEARS IN THE PAPER. The Daily assumes no financial responsibility for errors, or damages due to errors. Ad will re-appear free of charge upon request if information is incorrect due to our error. The Daily reserves the right not to print any classified ad.

WANTED!

ADVENTUROUS YOUTH FOR OVERSEAS PROJECTS

YOUTH CHALLENGE INTERNATIONAL is seeking youth ages 18 - 25 who are looking for a challenge, an opportunity to grow, and a chance to contribute to their community.

Experience of a Lifetime!

If you are interested in volunteer service, learning new skills and working hard, then YCI has a program for you: work for 3 months next winter on community projects in Guyana or Costa Rica. Service and adventure!

Build New Job Skills

You could be involved in rebuilding a school, delivering health education in a remote village, or building trails in a National Park.

Apply by March 6th



Call YCI for more info: (416) 504-3370

H O U S I N G

Apts to rent - 1 1/2, 2 1/2, 3 1/2. Heated, hot water, renovated, painted. Fridge, stove included. Situated across from de l'Eglise Metro station. Call 761-0808.

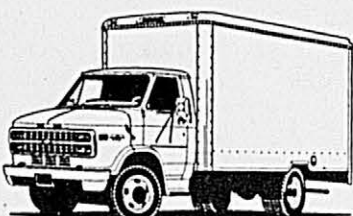
Ideal for 4 students. 8 1/2 available now in Outremont. 4 Closed bedrooms, huge living room, large dining room. Fully furnished, TV, VCR, washer & dryer. Move in with your toothbrush and your books. \$1000 all incl. 271-1288.

Sunny room fully furnished available now on Querbes between Bernard & Lajoie, close to transportation. I am interested in a Japanese/English or French exchange. 271-2080.

MOVERS / STORAGE

Moving/Storage. Closed van or truck. Local & long distance. Ott-Tor-Van-NY-Fla-7 days, 24 hours, low rates. Steve 735-8148.

ANBER MOVING & STORAGE



Closed van or truck. Local and long distance. Toronto - Vancouver (wkly) NY - Fla. (USA) 7 days - 24 hours. LOW RATES

Steve
735-8148

HELP WANTED

Earn \$100-\$200/day Master School of Bartending - bartending & table service. Complete placement agency. Leaders in the hospitality industry for 15 yrs. McGill rate 849-2828. WWW.BARTENDING.COM

Castling Mack Daddys and Sheba Queens for blaxploitation film. Good looking blacks/whites/males/females. To get your pimp-on call Ashley 938-0943 Chris 634-3362.

Travel-Teach English: 5 day/40hr (Feb. 25-Mar.1) TESOL teacher certification course (or by correspondence). 1,000's of jobs available NOW. FREE information package, toll free 1-888-270-2941.

"You oughta be in pictures" General Casting call, talent search. Film, TV, Theater, Fashion. Need actors, dancers, musicians, models, tech. crew. Sat. Jan 24th 11am-4pm. 1200 Atwater. Walter Casting 868-1202.

WORDPROCESSING/TYPING

Success To All Students
WordPerfect 5.1 Term papers, resumes, applications, transcription of tapes. Editing of grammar. 29 years experience. \$1.50/D.S.P. 7 Days/ week. On Campus/Peel/ Sherbrooke. Paulette 288-9638

Accurate word processing for term papers, reports, theses, (Word or WordPerfect, laser printer) Pick up available. 289-9518.

Ellen will type papers, projects, theses, etc. Quick, accurate, neat and reasonable! Call 9am-6pm 231-1880.

Word Processing of term-papers, theses, reports, etc. Word-perfect 5.1 Laser printer. Fast professional service. Good rates. Close to McGill. Brigitte 282-0301

Avez-vous lu le **FRANCAIS** cette semaine?

F O R S A L E

Abya-Yala Bookstore. The best of Latin America: new and used books in Spanish, English, French. 4555 St-Laurent, just North of Mt-Royal. (514) 849-4908.

Daytona Beach Florida Spring'Break 1998. \$289 February 20-March 1. 7 nights. Daily Pool-deck Parties, beach activities. Fun, Sun, Party-time! 392-9789.

LESSONS / COURSES

Art Courses
Pottery, sculpture, painting, drawing, live model, free studio time. 460 St. Catherine W. #502 Metro McGill 879-9694.

Come and Practice your French with Francophones. Bilingual Club Half and Half. Tel. 465-9128.

N O T I C E S

Submit your work
The Pillar magazine wants poetry, photos, art, short prose fiction. Submissions to porters office-arts building. Deadline January 30. For info: 840-8760.

advertising: **THE DAILY** 398-6790



The Post Graduate Students' Society
PGSS ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA
The nomination and petition period for PGSS elections and referenda is now open.

Elected Positions

All regular members returning for the 1998-99 academic year are eligible to run. Nominations for elected positions require 50 signatures of members.

The following Executive Positions are available:

Executive Chairperson
External Affairs And Government Relations Co-ordinator
Finance Co-ordinator
Internal Affairs Co-ordinator
University and Academic Affairs Co-ordinator

The following Representative Positions are available

Board of Governors
Masters Senator
Doctoral Senator

Referenda

Petitions for referenda on any question dealing with Society affairs may be made by members. A petition of 50 signatures is required

The nomination and petition period ends at 12:00 PM
Feb 4, 1998

A Summer Course at
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Why Not!

We welcome visiting students

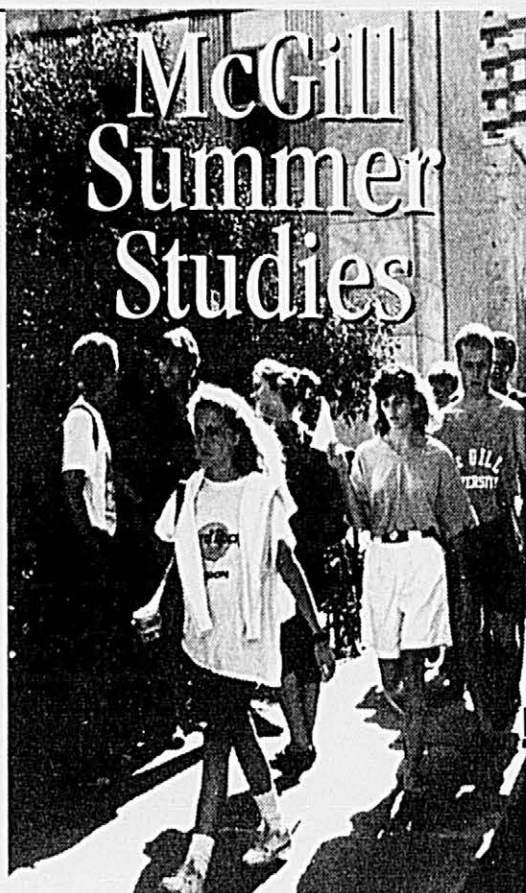
Increase your options
Lighten your course load
Enrich your program
Experience Montreal

It's all here for you!

McGill Summer Studies offers a full range of university-level courses.

Registration opens:
February 27, 1998

McGill Summer Studies
550 Sherbrooke Street West
Suite 585, West Tower
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1B9
Phone: (514) 398-5212
Fax: (514) 398-5224
E-mail: Summer@550Sherb.Lan.McGill.Ca



Please send me
1998 Summer Studies
and information on
summer accommodation
in McGill University
Residences.

NAME			
ADDRESS			
CITY	PROVINCE/STATE		
POSTAL/ZIP CODE	PHONE		
UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE			



FACULTY OF MUSIC Course Announcement

The Opera (210-387B)

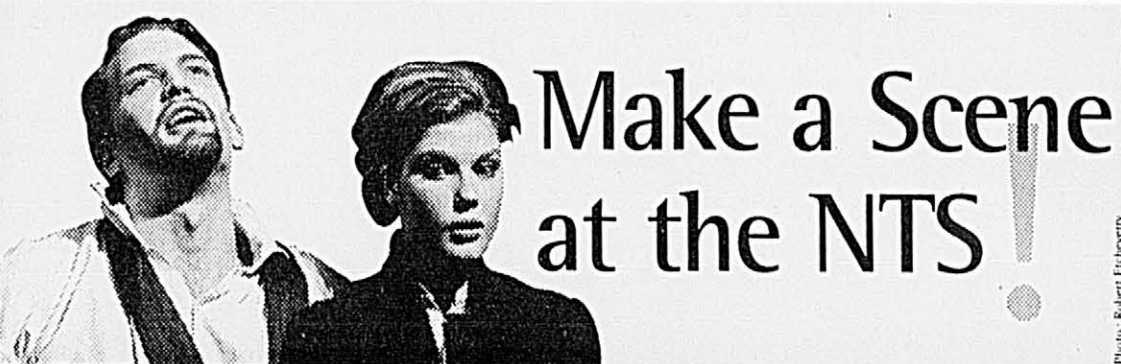
(Prof. R. Lawton)

is being offered in the winter term.

Tuesday/Thursday: 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Strathcona Music Building: Room C201

Register via MARS

advertising:
398-6790



**Make a Scene
at the NTS!**

NATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL OF CANADA
1998 AUDITION TOUR
Acting Playwriting Technical Production Scenography

Deadline for application
[February 15, 1998]

National Theatre School of Canada
5030 St. Denis, Montreal, Quebec, H2J 2L8
(514) 842-7954

E-mail: info@ent-nts.com Web site: www.ent-nts.com



TENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MCGILL OMBUDSPERSON FOR STUDENTS

SEPTEMBER 1, 1996 TO AUGUST 31, 1997

I am pleased to present the tenth Annual Report of the McGill University Ombudsperson for Students for the reporting period September 1, 1996 to August 31, 1997 in accordance with the terms of reference of the Office as approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors. This is my fourth report to Senate as I enter the last year of my five year appointment.

THE MANDATE

The Mandate of the Ombudsperson for Students is the impartial investigation and informal resolution of complaints by McGill students who feel that their rights have not been respected by some member of the McGill community. As stated in earlier reports, it is essential that the Ombudsperson be perceived as neutral and not as a student advocate in order to arrive at a fair, reasonable and informal resolution to a problem. Advocacy cases are generally referred to the Legal Information Clinic at McGill where our student lawyers provide an excellent service. I often work collaboratively with the clinic by continuing to support a student through the disciplinary or grievance procedure.

The Ombuds Office received a further budget cut this year as did all other parts of the University. A small accumulated surplus will permit the office to publish, once again, its annual report in the student newspapers. The "barebones" budget maybe of concern however, when the search begins for my replacement.

STATISTICAL REPORT OF CASES

The Ombuds Office recorded 248 cases this year which is a drop from the previous year. However, the complexity of many of the cases made the workload equal to previous years. The reduced number highlights the fact that there are a number of other important front line helpers at McGill. To name a few: Donald Sedgwick and the other Arts and Science Advisors, Judy Pharo, Engineering, Helen Van Eyke, Management, Charlotte Legare, Graduate Studies, Dean of Students and Associate Dean of Students, Rosalie Jukier and Rhonda Amsel, SSMU Executive and the Legal Information Clinic.

DISCUSSION OF CASES

As Ombudsperson for Students at McGill, I see the best and the worst of the University. In relation to my work, the best includes:

- 1) Chairs, Associate Deans and Associate Vice Principals who are skilled in mediation between students and Faculty, who deal successfully with troubled students and who apply regulations fairly but with a student centred focus.
- 2) Faculty who are accessible to students during office hours and by telephone when necessary; who provide helpful feedback on assignments or exams; who review papers, exams when students so request, who honour their course outlines and assign topics appropriately in advance of deadlines; who refrain from personalized remarks in written work or in the classroom, and who are open to constructive feedback from students.
- 3) Managers, support staff and advisors who are available and caring and take initiative in problem solving on behalf of students.
- 4) Student Services like the Office for Students with Disabilities, Financial Aid, Health and Mental Health, Counselling Services and the Freshman Coordinator.

A brief list of the worst would include the following: severe breakdown in Graduate Student/supervision relationship or supervisors who leave McGill meaning that students are left without adequate supervision or support; racist, sexist comments or behaviour; dollar decisions that have a very negative impact on students including Government regulations that create bureaucratic runarounds for them; theft of personal belongings/property from bags left during exams or from gym lockers; thoughtless, judgemental statements or letters to students; the absence of clear, written departmental or Faculty Policies on important academic areas or unique applications of these policies by Departments; repeated use of the same exams; increased pressures on students that lead to academic misconduct such as plagiarism or cheating.

It is important to reflect on the economic climate and academic environment that generates many of these "worse" case scenarios. Decreasing resources across the University have put substantial pressures on Faculty and support staff to do more with less. Faculty need to juggle multiple demands such as increased pressure to obtain externally funded research grants and to publish; to teach larger classes better; and meet escalating demands from students for feedback, help and expertise. Economic factors and the need to work put financial pressures on students that may leave them less time for preparation for exams or written assignments.

These economic factors are often compounded by scarcer resources for Graduate level study, which may lead, for example to working in teams when individual work is demanded. Human frailties are challenged by these realities that can lead at the Graduate level to issues related to intellectual property, co-authorship, or data ownership; unreasonable demands on students; unavailable supervisors. Undergraduate students need to be clear about what is an acceptable way to cite and to source the work of others. We should not assume this knowledge as it is often compounded by cultural differences. Faculty should be explicit in course outlines and perhaps include a syllabus supplement that clearly states the guidelines for written work.

I would once again like to briefly address the question of troubled students. McGill is a very large community so it is to be expected that there will be some of its members who will require special attention. San Diego State University has a pamphlet that describes problem behaviours and the most helpful and least helpful responses to these behaviours. For example, how to work with a very depressed or suicidal student or a very angry student. I feel that a similar pamphlet would be of benefit to all of us at McGill: - librarians, support staff, faculty members, chairs, Advisors, etc. I welcome feedback on this topic from all members of the McGill Community.

CONCLUSION

A University is a very complex community. McGill's decentralized model adds to this complexity as rules and policies change from Faculty to Faculty and even within Faculties. The Ombudsperson for Students is one of the people who guides students through this community and should not be perceived as a threat, but rather a resource to be used for problem solving. The Globe and Mail, Saturday, September 6, 1997 featured an article on Daniel Jacoby, the Quebec Ombudsperson entitled "Quebec Ombudsperson continues quest for justice". Jacoby describes his present position as "entre deux chaises" as he awaits a decision about his renewal. He is concerned that a non renewal would be based on his too harsh criticism of the government and that future Ombudsmen would be deterred from speaking out. He suggests that being too quiet can even lead to the demise of the Office, as happened in Newfoundland in 1990. His Ontario colleague, Roberta Jamieson, feels that there is always a tension between the Ombudsman and the Government. She states that the "tension has to be managed carefully, because it can be creative or it can be unhealthy". It is my hope that I have used the tension in a creative and helpful manner. I always operate openly and with the students permission. I initially try to help solve problems at the level that they are presented. I am not always successful in achieving the hoped for outcome but I work hard to ensure a fair and equitable process.

I have enjoyed my work as Ombudsperson for Students and look forward to the continued challenges in my last year in the Office.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I have stated in previous reports, one of the most important parts of this annual report is to acknowledge all of the people who have been of special help to the Office this year. The list has grown once again this year as there is great support for the Office of the Ombudsperson from all members of the McGill Community. Before presenting the bouquets for 1996-97, I would like to highlight some "comings and goings". I welcomed the appointment of Rhonda Amsel as Associate Dean of Students and Martha Crago as Associate Vice Principal Graduate Studies. I am sad to see Lydia White and Sarah Westphal leave as Associate Vice Principal Graduate Studies and Associate Dean of Arts, respectively. Each of these colleagues made a significant contribution while in Office.

Bouquets to:

- Vice Principal Academic Bill Chan
- Associate Vice Principals, Graduate Studies, Lydia White, Martha Crago and Bernard Robaire
- Associate Deans of Arts, Science, Music, Education and Management, McDonald, Sarah Westphal, Nick de Tacazy, Kenneth Woodman, John Gradwell, Mary Dean Lee, Eric Norris
- Dean of Students Rosalie Jukier and Associate Dean Rhonda Amsel
- Charlotte Legare, Faculty of Graduate Studies
- Mariella Johansen, Director of Admissions, Kim Bartlett, Cathy Mayhew, Admissions
- Morty Yalofsky, Director of Continuing Education
- Mary Jo McCullogh, Supervisor, Cashiers Office
- Judy Stymest, Director, Student Aid Office
- Michele Raymond, McGill Computer Store - Publicity for the office
- Suzy Slavin, Library
- Alexandre Pless & Angela Campbell and Legal Information Clinic
- Don McGowan, V.P. University Affairs, S.S.M.U.
- Students who consulted the office and shared their concerns and wisdom.
- And finally my colleagues in the Office for Students with Disabilities, Joan Wolforth, Director, Caitlin Keelan, Debra Chatfield our excellent secretary and Chris Foote and the former Ombudsperson, Annette Werk.

If you require the services of the Ombudsperson for students please call 398-7059 for an appointment. The office is located at Burnside Hall, Room 107.